

## **Reopening Child Care In Illinois**

One of the primary goals of Illinois' Day Care Licensing regulations is to promote the well-being of all children while they are under the care of family child care homes and centers. It does this by maintaining strict control policies. Due to the ongoing pandemic, additional procedures and policies have been put in place based on guidance from public health experts to ensure the safety and health of children including those with special needs such as infants with non-verbal Autism, staff, and families.

### **phased approach to safely and prudently reopen**

It is public knowledge that many child care facilities were barred due to emergency circumstances in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, with the gradual lifting of lockdown measures, the Illinois Government has put in place a phased approach to safely and prudently reopen these vital child care centers while taking into account the new complexities of health, safety and social distancing protocols that need to be adhered to by providers.

Daycare providers that were granted emergency licenses by DCFS during phases 1 and 2, are now able to operate under their non-emergency licenses (if available) as their respective regions enter into phase 3. Meanwhile, child care programs that were closed during the first two phases but plan to reopen in either phase 3 or 4, must have a well-articulated Reopening Plan that demonstrates their adherence to revised operational and preparedness policies before resuming operations.

### **revised operational and preparedness policies**

Programs must also have plans in place for isolating sick individuals, providing substitute caregivers when needed, reporting positive cases to authorities while maintaining privacy, and working with local health departments for contact tracing and determining the need for facility closure.

Licensed-exempt homes will be required to adhere to pre-COVID-19 group size limits, meaning no more than three unrelated children can be present at one time. Licensed homes may reopen in Phase 3 after submitting a Reopening Plan to DCFS with operational and preparedness components. Capacity will be limited to either the program's licensed capacity or 10 children, whichever is smaller. Group day care homes must also have the ability to keep children in separate groups of 10 or fewer, up to their maximum licensed capacity.

As for the first 4 weeks of operation, child care centers will operate with reduced group sizes, with a maximum of 8 infants and 10 children in other age groups per room. Emergency Day Care Centers that have been open for at least 4 weeks with an emergency license have already fulfilled this requirement. Before expanding enrollment, programs must review their Reopening Plan with their DCFS Licensing Representative and ensure they have at least 50 square feet per child aged 2 years and older. Additionally, they must add a minimum of 4 square feet per infant or

toddler for sleeping space to maintain social distancing measures. The expanded group size limits for Phases 3 and 4 are listed, along with the reminder that ratios must be followed as per licensing regulations. For more in depth info on this check out.

### **Autism Treatment and Support**

As part of advocating for individuals with developmental disabilities, Illinois Autism is committed to actively providing support and educating the public on important updates in treatment. We are dedicated to offering high-quality care, ABA treatment, and valuable resources for individuals with autism and their families. Get in touch with us to learn more about how we can assist you in your journey towards improved quality of life for those with autism.

#### **References:**

Illinois Autism Center

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